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My Yoruba Alphabet

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# MY YORUBA ALPHABET

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# MY YORUBA ALPHABET

BY

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# MY YORUBA ALPHABET— PRONUNCIATION

Euphony plays such an important part in the Yoruba language that I think it would have been easy on the part of its first writers to have avoided some of the signs now in use. For instance there are the dots written under the letters O, E, S, giving them the sounds of aw as in "law," e as in "met," and sh as in "shape." These signs, being unknown in the English language, are anathema to the English publishers and printers. This means that the publication of Yoruba works is very expensive. To save this expense, and to the student a certain amount of confusion, I have on this occasion adopted a new if clumsier method of spelling. The alteration of the writing S with a dot under it to SH is simple and I think correct. As to the vowel sounds O and E with dots under them, a glance at the dictionary will convince you that as a general rule if a word commences with either of these sounds the intermediate consonant is immediately followed by one or the other or then by the vowels I, U, A, but never by the vowels E or O without dots, pronounced as in the words "they" and "go." I therefore

get out of úsing the dots under these letters by doubling the intermediate consonant ; thus the word ERE with a dot under each E, meaning mud, becomes ERRE ; EWU with a dot under the E becomes EWWU, clothes ; and the E in each of these words has the sound of E as in "met." On the other hand, words in which there is only one intermediate consonant between two vowels, such as EDE, language, continue to have the long E sound as in the English word "they." Again the word OLO, a mouse, retains the long O sound as in GO, whereas olo with the dots under the O's, meaning a grindstone, becomes ollo and is pronounced awllaw. It is my opinion that by adopting this system a great deal of irritating confusion in spelling may be avoided ; for instance, the word Emi means I, while Emi with a dot under the E means spirit ; Ile is a house, while Ile with a dot under the E means land ; Bale is the head of the house, but Bale with a dot under the E means the head of the land or country ; under my system confusion can be avoided and these words appear as under : Emi, I ; Emmi, Spirit ; Ile, house ; Ille, land ; Bale, head of the house ; Balle, head of the country. But the Yoruba scholar will ask how I am going to manage about the primitive verbs ending in the vowel sounds O and E with dots under them. To get over this difficulty I make use of the hyphen and place it just before the consonant preceding the hitherto dotted vowels ; thus instead of writing Bo or Be with dots under the O and E I write -Bo or -Be, the hyphen signifying that the O has the sound aw, and the E the

sound e as in "met," and that should the primitive verb be turned into a noun by its being prefixed by a vowel the consonant shall be duplicated; thus -Bo, to return, will become Abbo, arrival; -Be, to peel, will become obbe, a knife.

Having done away with the dotted vowels the pronunciation of the rest of the vowel sounds is easy:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | is always | "a" | as in | father. |
| E | ,, | "e" | ,, | they. |
| I | ,, | "i" | ,, | marine. |
| O | ,, | "o" | ,, | go. |
| U | ,, | "u" | ,, | rude. |
| AI | ,, | "ai" | ,, | aisle. |
| OI | ,, | "oi" | ,, | oil. |
| AU | ,, | "au" | ,, | now. |

The consonants are pronounced as in English save that G is always hard, but because the sound P in many cases follows the K sound the symbol P is used for all words where the two sounds come together, thus Akpere is written Apere; again P is used to express the sounds pw, thus Epwe is written Epe. The sound GB (Q in English) is also said to be hard to pronounce, or, as "they say," P and GB have sounds which do not exist in English.

# INTRODUCTION

For many years, the author has been under the firm conviction that all the works of the Great Creator of the universe, whether mighty or seemingly insignificant, whether performed directly or apparently indirectly, conform, without exception, to one definite, universal order, and that the spirit, or inner consciousness of man, moves in conformity with this universal order so long as that consciousness works in obedience to the dictates of its Great Author.

There is no doubt in the writer's mind that, being the expression of the inner consciousness of man, the primitive construction of all languages complies with this great, overruling principle.

The Yorubas in Nigeria are by nature deeply religious and their language is at present comparatively pure: it therefore lends itself admirably to the purpose of this small treatise, namely, the demonstration of the foregoing philosophy with a view to assisting teachers and students in the study of the Yoruba language which ranks as one

of the three chief languages of Nigeria. In the construction and development of a language, causes, beginnings, and processes become obscure and are often obliterated by effects and results in the passage of time. It is the writer's hope that the study of these few brief chapters will be instrumental in directing the thoughts of Yoruba teachers, students, and children into such channels as shall conduce to an accurate and intelligent appreciation of the philosophy in their truly beautiful language.

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# MY YORUBA ALPHABET

## CHAPTER I

### THE GREAT UNIVERSAL ORDER

It is most important that the student should have at the outset a clear idea of the **Great Universal Order** which will be unveiled, analysed, and applied to the Yoruba language in the ensuing chapters.

This **Great Universal Order** comprises *seven* or *eight* great **Elemental Factors.**[1]

*First* among these factors stands AUTHORITY.

It is quite easy to understand that nothing whatever can be conceived and much less begun without an author. *Authority* must therefore exist before everything else.

The *second* of these factors is MORALITY.

It should be fairly easy to understand that without recognition and respect—*morality*, the purpose of authority could not be accomplished and authority could not therefore exist. It is common knowledge

[1] The Elemental factors in this order have been gradually evolved from the author's study of the habits, customs, and language of the Bavili or people of Loango in Congo Français. The present study relates to the Yoruba people who live as far north of the equator as the Bavili do south of it, and who are in no way connected with the latter.

that, whether in the house, or in the school, or in the church, or in a community of any description, where there is no recognition of, or respect for, authority, the work of that authority cannot be carried on and the authority itself is of no avail. Therefore, with *authority* there must be *morality*.

The *third* of these factors is POTENTIALITY.

*Where* there is authority together with *morality*, there will of necessity proceed the power to work and to act—*potentiality*. It is common knowledge that where there is properly recognised authority, power always exists. Therefore, *potentiality* is the natural outcome of *authority* coupled with *morality*.

But *potentiality* is valueless without the will-power to work and to act. The physical power of a strong man is useless without the will-power—*volition* to exert that strength.

The *fourth* of these factors, therefore, is VOLITION.

As the result of the above three, *volition* enables man to conceive, or to create, or to sow, or to plant, or to begin any work.

The *fifth* of these factors is therefore VITALISATION.

The mutual action of *volition* and *vitalisation* sets up generation, life, and growth, and thus paves the way for the next factor.

The *sixth* of these factors is RECIPROCITY.

For the combined work of the first five factors to fructify, there must be co-operation and responsive action—*reciprocity*. It is common knowledge that in plant life the leaves inhale certain elements, but that the same leaves must also exhale. Without this

*reciprocity*, the work of the plant would be incomplete and its life would be strangled. Therefore, with all the other factors working successfully, there must be resulting *reciprocity*.

The *seventh* of these factors is CAPACITY.

The fructification of the work of the foregoing six factors will generate and produce inherent knowledge and appreciation of the properties and capabilities possessed—*capacity*.

Taking plant life again, it is common knowledge that when a tree has fructified, its fruit becomes a new seed and the process of creative work begins afresh in the form of the offspring of the old creation.

Thus, the *eighth* of these factors is EFFECTIVITY.

*Effectivity* at once becomes a new *authority*, and a new generation comes into existence under the same GREAT UNIVERSAL ORDER which ever remains constant.

## SYNTHESIS OF THE GREAT UNIVERSAL ORDER.

1. AUTHORITY. (*Causative Factor.*)

*The creator, originator, or head.*

2. MORALITY. (*Psychological Factor.*)

*Recognition and respect for, or the maintenance of, authority.*

3. POTENTIALITY. (*Psychological Factor.*)

*The power to work and to act which emanates from authority coupled with morality.*

The we in all things.

4. VOLITION. (*Psychological Factor.*)

*The will-power enabling an author supported by morality to exert potentiality.*

5. VITALISATION. (*Physiological Factor.*)

*The generation, life, and growth resulting from the above and acting as a new cause.*

6. RECIPROCITY. (*Physiological Factor.*)

*The co-operation, responsive action, and fructification, proceeding from vitalisation and volition.*

7. CAPACITY. (*Physiological Factor.*)

*The inherent knowledge and appreciation engendered by volition and vitalisation.*

8. EFFECTIVITY. (*Eighth Effective Factor.*)

*The consequent birth of a new generation which constitutes a new authority.*

In all three psychological and three physiological factors between cause and effect.

# CHAPTER II

## YORUBA SPIRITUALITY

In the Yoruba language, *spirit* and *person* are so closely connected and are so frequently almost inseparable that there can be no doubt as to the Yorubas being a spiritual race and as to all their spiritual yearnings having been prompted by the Great Universal Spirit.

Such a beautiful country as Yorubaland, with its richly-wooded hills and valleys, its fertile plains, its rushing and its gently-flowing rivers and streams, its thunder and lightning, could not but produce such a race, and it would be astonishing were its people not deeply religious and spiritual.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find throughout the whole of the Yoruba country, and permeating every phase of Yoruba life, the expression of an inner consciousness of the existence of the Great Guiding Spirit of the universe—Almighty God, OLLORUN, the Owner of the heavens.

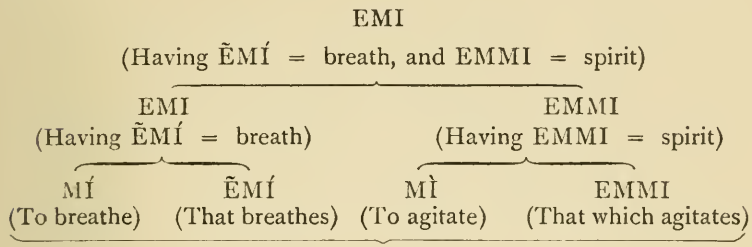
It is found in the pagan crowd participating in the performance of some pagan sacrifice, or in the same crowd surrounding a pagan priest and magic-man, awaiting the decision of the deity to whom he professes to have offered sacrifice and intercession

on their behalf; it may be found in the shape of a sacred grove on the outskirts of even a so-called *Christian* village with its *Eshu's* (devil's) little shelter or its small pot called *ominerro*, or *omi erro*, containing stagnant water which is known as *water of wisdom*, the drinking of which is believed to make the barren woman fertile; it may be found in the singing of Christian hymns and chants by the Baron, or farmer, and his followers; and, almost throughout the whole of the land, it may now be found in the crowded congregations of the churches established by Roman Catholics, the Church Missionary Society, Wesleyans, Baptists, and others of the Christian persuasion, cheek by jowl with Mahommedan mosques and pagan groves. And all this, the former not less than the latter, is the expression of the inner consciousness, or spirituality, of the Yoruba in their strivings after perfect communion with the Great Universal Spirit, the Great Author of their existence, Ollorun, the Great Owner of the heavens.

No less than in all these things is Yoruba spirituality to be found in the primitive formation of the Yoruba language. So deeply ingrained is the sense and idea of spirit that spirit and person are practically synonymous in the Yoruba language, the only difference being in accent and intonation, of which the following is an excellent example :—

EMI, MI = I (Person).
MÍ = To breathe.
ẼMÍ = Breath.
EMMI = Spirit, life, soul, influence, agitation.
MÌ = To agitate.

It will be seen that MI is common to all but varies in intonation. It may be reasonably assumed, therefrom, that MI is the substantive expression of the one great idea in its slightly varying forms.




The close relationship between the various forms of E will be seen at a glance also in the following :—

ENI = One.
ENNI = A person, or one who is.
ẼLA = A wedge.
ELLA = A splinter.
EBI = Hunger.
ẼBI = Vomit, or matter thrown up from the stomach.

Thus it will be seen that EMI (= I) is the complete idea of spirit and person. It is quite conceivable that in the minds of the early progenitors of the Yoruba race there may have prevailed the idea that all these elements—*person*, *spirit*, *soul*, *life*, *breath*, and *agitation* —were essential to the existence of a perfect being, namely, the first person—EMI, or MI (I).

In addition to this, there is the idea of the recently departed father, the great I AM, the EMMI, breathing into and agitating, or inspiring the son who succeeds him.

The idea of death absolute is never entertained in the mind of the Yoruba. Those departed this life ever exist to inspire or terrify their successors.

The foregoing evidence of the spirituality of the Yoruba people should have prepared the mind of the student suitably for the study of the subject matter which is to follow, namely, the analysis of the Yoruba language with a view to demonstrating and, it is hoped, establishing its conformity with the GREAT UNIVERSAL ORDER which I believe was ordained by God.

# CHAPTER III

## MY YORUBA ALPHABET

THE Yoruba consonants in certain natural groups, together with the Yoruba vowel sounds in the order of the Yoruba personal pronouns, as arranged in the following category, are in exact conformity with the GREAT UNIVERSAL ORDER which was discussed in Chapter I and found to comprise eight great ELEMENTAL FACTORS.

### THE GREAT UNIVERSAL ORDER.

#### ELEMENTAL FACTORS.

*Personal Pronouns* (*Vowels*). *Consonants.*

##### 1. AUTHORITY

(*Ofin*).

I, EMI. (I.) C, F, F, (V). *Nature's Aspiraies.*

This "I" represents the emmi (spirit), or departed father, who is the acknowledged *authority*, or Head of the Yoruba family.

CI = To be.
FI = To push.
Fin = To search out.
ICI = A thing newly created.

### 2. Morality

(*Mimmó*).

U, 'O, or O, IWWO. (Thou.)

The IWWO represents the widow of the departed, who holds an honoured position among the Yorubas. When the father dies the widow howls (iwwo = one who howls) and the people respect her grief. She believes herself to be in close touch with the departed father and hands on the messages she receives from him to her son—the I that then is. (This is what has been called ancestor worship.)

Being the recognition of *authority*, this falls under the heading of Morality.

L, M, N. *Liquids.*

-LO = To institute an inquiry.
-MO = To be sensible.
NU = To shine.
ILLO = Precept.
IMMO = Purity.
INU = Disposition.

### 3. Potentiality

(*Ashe*).

'O, or O, ON. (He.)

The ON represents the son, who, inspired by the message from his late father received through the mediation of his mother, now *has* and *says*—O NI = he has and he says: thus O N I = ON. He it is who rules on earth and speaks with *authority*, which he has obtained from Authority through Morality. (From his departed father through his mother.)

SH, S, Z or S. *Sibilants.*

SHO = To be stubborn.
SO = To yield.
-SO = To speak.
ESHU = The devil.
ESO = Fruit.
OSSO = Much speaking.

### 4. Volition
(*Agidi*).

A, IWA. (Passion) } AWA. (We.)
A, IWA. (Being) }

A, IWA (Passion) in the AWA (We) represents the husband. He watches over the household fetishes. He receives the message from his father to increase and multiply, and thus he performs the will of Authority, the spiritual Head of the family.

G, K, GB or Q. *Gutturals.*

GAN = To censure.
GBÀ = To conform, to acquiesce.
GBÁ = To strike.
KAN = To knock.
AGAN NI = A back-biter.
ÀGBÁ = Manhood.

### 5. Vitalisation
(*Idagba*).

A, IWA. (Passion) } AWA. (We.)
A, IWA. (Being) }

A, IWA (Being) in the AWA (We) represents the wife, the feeder, sustainer, maker.

T, D, W. *Dentals.*

TA = To produce.
WA = To be.
DA = To create or make.

### 6. Reciprocity.
(*Ifiji.*)

'E, ENNYIN. (You.)

The 'E, ENNYIN represents the female offspring of the AWA (We) who carry foodstuff to the market for barter and exchange. These ENNYIN (yous) are thus the movers.

Y, H, J. *Exhaled Aspirates.*

-YÈ = To move, to change.
YIN = To move.
-HE = Respectful answer.
-JÉ = To respond.
AYE = Living, alive.
EJJE = Blood.

### 7. Capacity.
(*Ipa*).

A, AWON. (They.)

The A, AWON represents the male offspring who WON, —limit and measure and in time become the heads and leaders of families. They reason (*nipa*), dominate (*bori*), and have capacity (*ipa*).

B, R, P. *Labials.*

BÁ = To meet.
RAN = To issue.
PA = To cause to suffer.
ÀBÁ = Proposal, suggestion.
ARA = Body.
ARÀ = Fashion, custom.
APÁ = Impression.

8. Effectivity.
(*Ère*).
The new I, EMI. (I.)
The new "I," EMI becomes the Head of a new generation.

## SYNTHESIS OF THE GREAT UNIVERSAL ORDER.

### Elemental Factors.

*Personal Pronouns* (*Vowels*). *Consonants.*

1. Authority.
(*Ofin*).
I, EMI. (I.) C, F. F, (V). *Nature's Aspirates.*

2. Morality
(*Mimmó*).
U, O or O, IWO. (Thou.) L, M, N. *Liquids.*

3. Potentiality
(*Ashshe*).
O or O, ON. (He.) SH, S, Z or S. *Sibilants.*

4. Volition
(*Agidi*).
A, AWA = Male. (We.) G, K, GB or Q. *Gutturals.*

5. Vitalisation
(*Idagba*).
A, AWA = Female. (We.) T, D, *Dentals*, and W.

6. Reciprocity
(*Ifiji*).
E, ENYIN. (You.) Y, H, J. *Exhaled Aspirates.*

7. Capacity.
(*Ipa*).
A, AWON. (They.) B, P, *Labials*, and R.

8. Effectivity
(*Ère*).
The new I, EMI.

The next few chapters will show how remarkably both the consonants and the vowels used in the construction of the Yoruba primitive verbs are in conformity with the ELEMENTAL FACTORS of the GREAT UNIVERSAL ORDER and how remarkably those primitive verbs express the qualities represented therein.

## CHAPTER IV

### AUTHORITY AND NATURE'S ASPIRATES, C, F, V, (F).

In West Africa, the silence and rest—iCimi—that existed—Ci—before the Spirit—EMMI—of God moved upon the waters can be easily imagined because it can be aptly compared with the pause or rest—iCimi—immediately preceding a tornado—eFuFu nla. And then the moving of the Spirit of God upon the waters can be compared with the wind—eFu—which whistles —suFe—through the trees, compelling—Fi—them to swing—Fi—, and pushing—Fi—the dust before it and causing things to make the sound—Ci. The wind itself is drawn—Fa—into a vacuum—oFo. The name of the gentle breeze is AFFEFFE.

Again, IFa is said to be the son of Jakuta the god of storms. It is said to have been he alone who was able to mend the Calabash, the breaking of which caused the floods to come upon the earth, as did the floods in the time of Noah, and it is said to have been he who made the earth dry again after the floods so that first the chameleon and then man could walk upon the dry ground, the Yoruba word to express this

work of Ifa's being Fi—to dry anything by exposing it directly to heat.

Ifa was the first high priest, or ONI, at a place called IFe, the capital of the Yoruba race from which all people are said to have come.

And again, in the sacred groves of Shango, son of Jakuta, the ancestor of the Alafin of Oyyo, the head of the Yoruba people, the god of lightning, is placed a mat or part of a mat called FaFa, which is derived from Fa—to draw.

A native wishing to draw the attention of a friend of his to his god to whom he has to sacrifice, sends a piece of FaFa to him to say—"My heart is drawing you."

The sounds Ci, Fu, Fa, or Va are those caused by breeze, wind, and tornado, and all therefore relate to the same natural force—that of the wind, which is the expression of *authority*: and thus they are closely connected with AUTHORITY—with the moving of AUTHORITY, namely, the Spirit of God, upon the waters when the great work of creation began, which is recorded in the book of Genesis; these consonants may thus be called *nature's aspirates*.

# CHAPTER V

## MORALITY AND THE LIQUIDS, L, M, N.

THE Yoruba liquids—L, M, N—may be said to symbolise the eLeMeNts—(i.) iLe (earth); (ii.) oMi (water); and (iii.) iNa (fire).

ILe—earth—is primarily that which is firm—from Le (to be firm). The earth and metal deities are said to be offended at and to resent strongly all kinds of immorality.

OMi—water—claims several gods. There are OLokun the sea deity, OLLosa the deity of the lagoons, and OshuMari the rainbow god. Fishermen are believed to lose their lives either by drowning or by being devoured by sharks or crocodiles, and landsmen lose their property by floods whenever they offend any of these gods.

Mu is to imbibe, and Mù is to sink or to be immersed and so drowned.

The oMi erro,[1] the little pot of water alluded to in a previous chapter, is the symbol of *all* the elements in the sacred groves.

[1] Little pots or bits of pot are sent by natives one to the other to remind them that certain Deities are to be remembered.

INa—fire—is very closely related to light and lightning—maNamaNa—which is believed to have come with Shango, the lightning god mentioned in chapter IV. Shango has his priests and priestesses, and elaborate festivals are held in his honour, especially in the Oyyo and Ibadan districts.

The verb Nà means not only to extend or spread, but also to chasten or to chastise. The worshippers of Shango believe that lightning and fires thus caused are sent to punish *immorality*.

From the foregoing, it will be readily seen that the liquids are expressive of and closely allied to MORALITY.

## CHAPTER VI

### POTENTIALITY AND THE SIBILANTS, SH, S, Z or S.

POTENTIALITY worries the native of West Africa. He understands neither the authority of "I AM" nor the power of "HE IS," and both powers are in many ways mysteries to him. He feels the shock of power in thunder—San—and splitting—San—which puts him to flight—oSa.

He recognises the existence of the power in the seed, or kernel, of the palm fruit to produce a new tree: the fruit, ESO, he likens to the female, and the kernel to the male. He also recognises the power—ASH SHE—in the leopard, in the crocodile, and in those who rule, kill and devour. His king, the Alafin of OYYO, he calls THE LEOPARD. The Alafin's soldiers wear leopard-skins: they are men of valour: they have their duty—ISH SHE—to perform: and they protect their king and government—ISH SHE LU.

SHe is to do or to act, Sú is to break forth, So is to bear fruit, and San is to split or to thunder. All these primary Yoruba verbs fall within the idea of POTENTIALITY.

The HE—the son of the dead father—is likened to seed, and the palm-kernel is his symbol, he being the one who is and who has—ON, the one who has the power transmitted to him from his departed father.

In view of the foregoing, the sibilants SH, S, Z or S must be classed under the third ELEMENTAL FACTOR —POTENTIALITY.

## CHAPTER VII

### VOLITION AND THE GUTTURALS, G, K, GB OR Q.

THE gutturals belong to the "husband" class—the class which has the power to act in accordance with will.

The lightning and thunder deity is believed to carry a wooden club, or cudgel, with which he is said to knock—Kan—people to vent his will upon them. Thunder and lightning are said in England to strike people. Man quakes— -GBON—before these terrifying manifestations of the power of nature.

The Yoruba husband—OKKO—is the striker : he is the farmer—olóKo, or the owner of the farm—oKo : he is the cutter (Gé—to cut) or feller of trees—iGi : and the sign of severity and wrath—iKanu—or cruelty —iKa—on the part of the husband who strikes and farms and fells is a stick—OGGO—like the one carried by eshu (the devil), and it is the symbol of the idea conveyed by the word—OKKO. The husband is the guardian of the ju jus—oGun : he is the owner of medicine—oGun : and he has to defend his family from the attacks of witches and other evil-minded persons.

The sun—ÕRUN—, the leader OGA in heaven—

õrun—is the great husband deity, while orisha oKo is the farm deity.

All these things are the expression of the enforcement of will. The husband wills to fell trees because he wishes to plant: and he knocks to enforce his will and to express his wrath.

Self-will is aGidi, IGB-GBORAN is obedience, and GBa is to conform.

In another way, ideas of cutting are connected with the sun, which cuts the day into four great divisions of time—i. From 6 o'clock in the morning to 9: ii. From 9 to 12: iii. From 12 noon to 3 o'clock in the afternoon: iv. From 3 to 6 in the evening. From this, the Yoruba gets his idea of counting—KA—time and season—iGBa.

GBin = to plant, and Ka = to reap, also fall within this category of primitive verbs.

It may be rightly deduced from the foregoing that the gutturals—G, K, GB or Q—belong to the fourth ELEMENTAL FACTOR—VOLITION.

## CHAPTER VIII

### VITALISATION AND THE DENTALS, T, D, W.

That which is struck by lightning is often fused—Dà.

To fuse—Dà—and to make or to create—Dá—are very closely connected in the Yoruba mind.

The kernel which, to all intents and purposes, appeared to be dead, quickens and thus begins to well or swell—Wú.

Tè means to tread.

All the above ideas, which are expressed by means of the dentals—T, D, and W—are connected with actual vitalisation. They are ideas in which are involved the wife, the moon, and *oke* the goddess of fertility.

The three stones used by the Yoruba wife for cooking purposes are called *ãro* ; but aDogan is the word used to express the idea of hearth or stove. This *ãro* is almost synonymous with wife. When a man sends a message and wishes to convey the idea of wife, he ties four stones together, the fourth being placed on the top of the three to represent the pot—*ikoko.*

ODó is a mortar in which yams are crushed.

The Yoruba wife places a charm upon herself (offo) or (èDè), upon her child, and upon her farm, thus shewing her belief in the ability of benevolent powers to protect her. She puts the charm upon her farm because without rain there will be no food. The profession of rain and charm makers owes its existence to this her fear of starvation.

The three primitive verbs constructed with the dentals in the vowel order of I, U, A, are :—

Tè = to tread: Wú = to swell : Dà = to fuse.

The foregoing is sufficient evidence to warrant the dentals, T, D, and W, being placed under the fifth ELEMENTAL FACTOR—VITALISATION.

# CHAPTER IX

## RECIPROCITY AND THE EXHALED ASPIRATES, Y, H, J.

HAVING been inspired, man gives back what he has received. This idea is expressed by the various Yoruba primitive verbs in the formation of which the exhaled aspirates have been employed.

The effect of fusing is struggling and striving—(JA = to strive).

The result of swelling on the part of the seed in vegetable life is germination—Hu.

The fowls and birds lay eggs—(Ye = to lay eggs).

All these effects are in response—idaHun—to the working of the creative powers: they are nature's answer—(JE = to answer) to the bestowal of gifts upon her.

When the female human offspring—EYYA—is ready to marry and a husband has been found for her, she is informed of the fact by a messenger who brings her the fruit of the palm tree—EYYIN—and a feather—EIYYE.

These offspring are the nYin who first move—Yin—and then become pregnant—Yún.

The three primitive verbs constructed with the

exhaled aspirates in the vowel order of I, U, A are :—

Ye = to lay eggs : Hu = to germinate : Ja = to strive.

There is a close affinity between the Y and the H, and in the ideas expressed in several Yoruba primitive verbs they are interchangeable. -Ho, Hun, Yun = to scratch ; Hu = to bud, and Yun = to be pregnant ; Ya = to tear, and Ha = to scrape. But the H is used in reference to the vegetable rather than to the animal kingdom.

The foregoing facts should be sufficient to place the exhaled aspirates, Y, H, J, under the sixth ELEMENTAL FACTOR—RECIPROCITY.

# CHAPTER X

## CAPACITY AND THE LABIALS, B, R, P.

As the effects under the exhaled aspirates are feminine, so the effects under the labials are masculine.

When the male human offspring is ready for marriage and a suitable girl has been found for him, a waistband made of the skin of an animal, together with a palm-kernel, is sent to him.

As fruit and feather connect the female offspring with the palm-tree and the birds, so animal-skin and palm-kernel distinctly associate the male offspring with the palm-tree and the animals. The use of R and the labials—B, P—in this connection is seen in Bò—to be full of leaves (the result of f and m—wind and rain) which form a shelter—ãBò—for the female of beasts—aBo : in õBi = parent and oBiRin = wife who bears and begets—Bi—children : it is seen in Ri = to be and iRin = life : in iPa = force (begotten of v or f and n—drawing and fire) : it is seen in Pa = to cause pain or suffering : and in okonRin = the living husband.

Thus R and the labials—B, P—fall under the seventh ELEMENTAL FACTOR—CAPACITY.

# CHAPTER XI

## SUMMARY

This chapter will be devoted to the summary of Yoruba words constructed with consonants under the limitations of Yoruba range of thought as expressed in the use of the vowels in the progressive and vertical order of the vowel sounds represented by the Yoruba personal pronouns and in the horizontal order of the vowels I, U, A, as shown below :—

| I. Vertical and Progressive Order. | | II. Horizontal Order. I, U, A. |
|---|---|---|
| 1 = I. | | I U A |
| 2 = U. | | I U A |
| 3 = O. | | I U A |
| 4 = A. | WE | I U A |
| 5 = A. | | I U A |
| 6 = E. | | I U A |
| 7 = A. | | I U A |
| 8 = I. | I | |

The summary in Synthesis I. and II. should establish decisively and conclusively the systematic conformity of the construction of Yoruba words—

especially of the Yoruba primitive verbs—with the eight Elemental Factors of the Great Universal Order. Teachers of the Yoruba alphabet and language will be wise, therefore, in adopting this Order, both on account of its being the purest, truest, and best mode of presenting the subject to children and students, and also with a view to inculcating this Order in the minds of those under tuition.

### Nature's Aspirates.

C. ICIMI = *rest*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

CI = *verb* to be or to exist.
CI = *conj.* and, also.
CI = *prep.* to, at, into.
CI = *adv.* awhile.

F. AFEFE = *wind*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

-FÉ = *verb* to blow.
-FÕ = ,, to wreck.
FA = ,, to scrape.

IFFÉ = *want, desire*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

FI = *verb* to compel.
FO = ,, to be empty.
FA = ,, to draw.
FE = *adv.* for ever.
FI = *prep.* to, by, with.
FÕ = *adv.* deeply.

### The Liquids.

L. ILE = *earth*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

LE = *verb* to be hard.
-LÒ = ,, to grind.
LA = ,, to appear.
LÉ = *adv.* exceedingly.
LI = *prep.* to, by, with.
LO = *adv.* more than.

M. OMI = *water*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

MÌ = *verb* to swallow, to agitate.
MU = ,, to drink.
MÚ = ,, to take, to bring.
MA = *aux.* indicating continuity of action.
MÀ = *adv.* indeed.
MÁ = ,, not.
-MO = ,, again.

N. INA = *fire*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

NI = *verb* to be.
NÍ = ,, to say.
NU = ,, to shine.
NA = ,, to spread.
NÁ = *adv.* already.
NI = *prep.* at, to, from, in, on, by.
N = sign of the present participle.

### Sibilants.

S. ESO = *fruit*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

SÈ = *verb* to cook.
SU = ,, to sow.
SO = ,, to produce.
SA = ,, to evaporate.
SÁ = *conj.* for.
SA = *adv.* for a time.

Z or S. ISE = *a quaking*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

SÉ = *verb* to shut.
-SO = ,, to heave.
SU = ,, to erupt.
SAN = ,, to crack, to thunder.
SAN = *adv.* loudly.
SUN = ,, strangely.

S = SH. ISH SHE = *work*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

SHA = *verb* to choose.
-SHE = ,, to do.
SHI = ,, to open.
SHO = ,, to watch.
SHAI = *adv.* not.
SHASHA = ,, quickly.

### Gutturals.

G. OGA ORUN = *the leader in heaven*, or ÕRUN = *the sun, the great husband*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

GE = *verb* to cut.
GUN = ,, to beat.
GAN = ,, to prog, pierce.
GAN = *adv.* uprightly.

GB. IGBA = *time or season*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

GBIN = *verb* to plant.
GBE = ,, to move, to carry, to bear.
-GBÒ = ,, to grow.
GBA = ,, to conform.
GBA = *adv.* entirely.

K. IKA = *calculation*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

KI = *verb* to press.
-KO = ,, to learn.
KU = ,, to die.
KÁ = ,, to reap.
KÀ = ,, to count.
KA = *adv.* around.
KA = *conj.* that.
KO = *adv.* not.
KU = ,, suddenly.

### Dentals.

T. ETAN = *seduction*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

TI = *verb* to thrust.
-TE = ,, to tread.
-TO = ,, to touch.
TA = ,, to produce.
TÉ = *adv.* on the very top of.
TÍ = *conj.* that.
TI = *prep.* to, of, from.
TÍ = *conj.* yet.
TÌ = *adv.* with, against.
TI = ,, heavily.
TUN = ,, again.
-TÕ = ,, well done.

W. WIWA = *being*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

WI = *verb* to say, to bind round.
WÒ = ,, to behold.
WU = ,, to swell.
WÀ = ,, to be, to dig.
WÁ = ,, to divide, to seek for.
WAI = *adv.* now, at once.

D. IDA = *formation or creation*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

DẼ = *verb* to tempt.
-DE = ,, to hunt.
DI = ,, to unite.
DO = ,, to cohabit, to encamp.
DU = ,, to deny.
DA = ,, to make or to create, and to fuse.
DÈ = *prep.* in the absence of.
DI = *conj.* till.

## Exhaled Aspirates.

Y. IYA = *maternity*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

YI = *verb* to move.
YE = ,, to lay eggs.
-YO = ,, to rejoice.
YÚN = ,, to be pregnant.
YÁ = ,, to tear.
YA = ,, to give way.
YẼ = *interj.* exclamation of sympathy, pain or surprise.
YÉ = *adv.* slightly.
YÕ = ,, well.
YÒ = ,, deeply.

H. OHUN = *sound, language*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

-HE = *noun* a respectful answer.
HE = *verb* to gather together.
HO = ,, to boil.
HU = ,, to germinate.
HA = ,, to crack.
HÃ = *interj.* expression of surprise or wonder.
HA = *adv.* indeed.

J. IJA = *strife*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

JE = *verb* to be.
JI = „ to forgive.
JÍ = „ to awake, to steal.
JU = „ to throw.
JÓ = „ to dance.
JA = „ to break.
JÀ = „ to strive.
JA = „ to pass through.
JU = *adv.* more.

LABIALS.

R. IROHIN = *intelligence*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

RI = *verb* to see.
-RE = „ to daub.
RIN = „ to walk.
RÈ = „ to go.
RO = „ to cultivate.
RÓ = „ to sound.
RU = „ to bear, to carry.
RAN = „ to command.
RÀ = „ to buy, to redeem.
RÃ = „ to perish.
RI = *adv.* never.
-RẼ = *pron.* thy.
RÈ = „ his.

B. OBBA = *dominion—as that of a parent* (*ọ̃bi*)—leads to the ideas expressed in :

BI = *verb* to beget, to punish.
-BÓ = „ to feed, to support, to worship.
-BO = „ to arrive.
BU = „ to bake.
BÚ = „ to abuse.
BÀ = „ to bring into contact with.
BÁ = „ to meet.
BÀ = „ to be bent.
BÁ = *prep.* with.
BÁ = *adv.* never.
BẼ = „ thus.
BI = *conj.* as, if, although.
BU = *adv.* almost, nearly.

P. IPA = *force, capacity*—leads to the ideas expressed in :

PIN = *verb* to divide, to share.
-PE = ,, to endure.
PE = ,, to be full.
PÈ = ,, to call.
-PO = ,, to be plentiful.
-PÒ = ,, to vomit.
PŨ = *adv.* sound as of a gun.
PA = *verb* to cause to suffer.
PA = *adv.* at once.
PÉ = *conj.* that.
PŨ = *adv.* precipitately.

## SYNTHESIS I. VERTICAL ORDER.

1. I. Authority = Ofin.
CI = to be.
FI = to push.
FIN = to search out.

2. U, 'O or O, Morality (*Purity*) = Mimmo.
-LO = to enquire.
-MO = to be sensible.
NU = to shine.

3. O, Potentiality (*Power*) = Ashe.
SHO = to be stubborn.
SO = to yield.
-SO = to speak.

4. A, Volition (Self-will) = Agidi.
GAN = to censure.
GBA = to acquiese.
KAN = to knock.

5. A. Vitalisation (*Propagation*) = Idagba.
,, (*Creation*) = Ida.
TA = to produce.
WA = to be.
DA = to create.

6. E. Reciprocity (*Forgiveness*) = IFIJI.
-HE = an answer.
-YE = to change.
-JE = to answer.

7. A. Capacity = Ipa.

RA = to issue.
BÁ = to meet.
PA = to cause to suffer.
ARA = custom.
ABÁ = suggestion.
APA = impression.

8. I. Effectivity (*Effect*) = ÈRE.

## SYNTHESIS II. HORIZONTAL ORDER.

| | I. | U. | A. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I, EMI, I = *Spirit.* | CI = to be. | FU = to blow. | FA = to draw. |
| 2. U, IWWO = *Thou.* | LE = to be firm. | MU = to imbibe. | NA = to lighten. |
| 3. O, ON = *He*, etc. | SHE = to do. | SO = to yield. | SAN = to thunder. |
| 4. A, AWA = *We.* | GE = to cut. | GBO = to grow. | KAN = to knock. |
| 5. A, AWA = *We.* | -TE = to tread. | WU = to swell. | DA = to fuse. |
| 6. E, ENYIN = *You.* | YE = to lay eggs. | HU = to germinate. | JA = to strive. |
| 7. A, AWON = *They.* | RI = to be. | BO = to be full of leaves. | PA = to cause to suffer. |
| 8. I, EMI = *I.* | IRIN = life. | ABO = shelter. OBIRIN = woman. | IPA = force. OKONRIN = man. |

That is to say the order in personal, animal, vegetable and physical production is clearly defined, and the philosophy at the back of the Yoruba language made quite clear.

# CHAPTER XII

## GENESIS AND THE ELEMENTAL FACTORS

THIS chapter will deal with the analogy between Genesis, the symbols found in the Yoruba sacred groves, and the Yoruba letters in their conformity with the ELEMENTAL FACTORS and the GREAT UNIVERSAL ORDER.

### 1. AUTHORITY.

The first three verses of Genesis relate how God made heaven and earth. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

These first three verses are represented by the alphabet letters I, U, A and CI, FU, FA, and they are symbolised by the mat = FAFA in the sacred groves.

### 2. MORALITY.

The second period of God's creative work—the division of the waters from the waters—is represented by the letters L, M, N, and symbolised by the pot of water = OMI ERRO in the sacred groves.

### 3. Potentiality.

The appearance of dry land which produced the seed-bearing vegetation capable of reproduction was the work of God's third creative period.

This period is represented by the letters SH, S, S or Z, and symbolised by the palm-fruit = ESO in the sacred groves.

### 4 and 5. Volition and Vitalisation.

The fourth period in Genesis accounts for the appearance of the sun and the moon.

### 4. Volition.

#### The Sun.

The sun is the symbol of the husband in nature, and the ideas conveyed by the letters A, G, K, GB or Q refer to his attributes. He is the leader = OGA on high = GA. He appears to move in a circle = KÁ, and he marks the time = IGBA in the heavens. The sun is symbolised by the shell = IGBA and the calabash = IGBA in the sacred groves.

### 5. Vitalisation.

#### The Moon.

The moon = OSHU, the symbol of the wife, the producer, is round and dark. The letters A, T, W, D refer to her powers, and she is symbolised by the long-necked calabash = ATTO in the sacred groves.

### 6. Reciprocity.

In the fifth period of creation God said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven."

This period is represented by the letters E, Y, H, J —EIYYE = bird, AHUN = tortoise, and EJJA = fish —and it is symbolised by the scales of fishes, the feathers of birds, and the shell of the tortoise in the sacred groves.

### 7. Capacity.

In the sixth period of creation God made the various species of animals, and He then made man in His own image.

This period is represented by the letters R and B, P—OBBA = Lord, BABA = father, OBIRIN = woman, ABO = female, ERAN = animal, APÁ = side, IPA = strength, OPPA = staff—and symbolised by the heads of animals and man, by the stick = OPPA or the sceptre = OPPA ALADE in the sacred groves or on the altars.

# CHAPTER XIII

## THE LORD'S PRAYER AND THE ELEMENTAL FACTORS

I HAVE now shown—

Firstly, that the order of the elemental factors was evolved from a study of the habits, customs, and language of the Bavili.

Secondly, that the meaning and order of the Yoruba personal pronouns conform to the meaning and order of these elemental factors.

Thirdly, that when the vowels standing for the Yoruba personal pronouns, in their order, are added to the consonants in a natural order the words thus formed give meanings which have been classified in the order of the elemental factors.

Fourthly, that when the vowels I U A are placed after each of the consonants in the three columns respectively, the results thus obtained are three categories giving us the Yoruba ideas of the development of Being, Vegetable growth, and physical energy.

Fifthly, that the words used to describe certain creative symbols found in the sacred groves in the

order of the alphabet refer to the acts of creation as given in the first chapter of Genesis.

All these analogies cannot be looked upon as accidental, and should therefore convince the most sceptical critic of the value and correctness of the order of my Yoruba alphabet. To clinch this remarkable order I will take, in this chapter, the Lord's Prayer, and show that the order and meaning of the clauses therein agree with the order and the meaning of the elemental factors, and in this way with the order and meaning of the letters of my Yoruba alphabet. This final analogy strengthens my conviction concerning the meaning of the elemental factors, and is the very best authority I can produce for calling the order thus revealed "the Great Universal Order."

### 1. AUTHORITY, I, F or V, F, C. OFIN.

God, the God of the Hebrew and the Christian, is known as I AM. He Himself said to Moses, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." (Exodus iii, 14). EMMI.

Jesus Christ, the Word of God who revealed and manifested God His Father to His followers, said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven."

Thus, on the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Christians recognise the great I AM as the One standing for all AUTHORITY = OFIN, and as Our Father in heaven. He it is whom we are to worship = ICIN. This is His revelation = IFIHAN.

2. MORALITY, U, I, M, N. MIMMO.

In the second clause of His beautiful prayer, "Hallowed be thy name," our Lord bids us hallow —YA CI MIMMO—our Father's name.

The name of the departed must not be mentioned by Yorubas, and such is the case with many other tribes of West Africa. And in the decalogue we are commanded—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

3. POTENTIALITY, O, S, SH and S or Z. ASH SHE.

In the third clause, Christ bids us say, "Thy kingdom come."

When His kingdom comes, He will rule = SHE AKOSO and speak = SO to us again as He spoke in the beginning, and we will hear His command = ASH SHE.

4. VOLITION, A, G, GB, K. AGIDI.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

We are to obey = GBAGB–GBO His loving will = IFFÉ so that co-ordination may reign in His kingdom and we may reap = KA the advantages which must fall to those who conform to the will of the great I AM.

5. VITALISATION, A, W, D, T. WIWA.

"Give us this day our daily bread" is the fifth clause of our Lord's prayer, and by it we are led to expect that if we obey God's will He will sustain us

and give us everything necessary to keep us in a state of being = WIWA. He created = DA man and He causes the earth to produce = TA.

### 6. Reciprocity, e, y, h, j. ifiji.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."

JI is to forgive, JE NIYA is to punish, and IYONU is compassion.

### 7. Capacity, a, r, b, p. ipa.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," that is, turn us aside = -RÓ from temptation and redeem = RA us from evil = BUBURU.

### 8. Effectivity.

"For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." This last clause was added many years after Christ taught His disciples His beautiful prayer: it was the effect of His teaching and the recognition of His Authority.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ENGLISH AND THE ELEMENTAL FACTORS

THIS, the concluding chapter of "My Yoruba Alphabet," will deal with the analogy between the English language and the Yoruba alphabet in their conformity with the ELEMENTAL FACTORS of the GREAT UNIVERSAL ORDER.

#### 1. AUTHORITY, CY, CE.

God is the Author of our being, the great I AM. He is the great Spirit of EXISTENCE, CONSISTENCY, INSISTENCE, and PERSISTENCE—the qualities and conditions in things and persons which are represented by the C of the alphabet—FORCE, VALENCY.

#### 2. MORALITY, IN, EN, EL, IM.

THOU represents the Conceiving Spirit of God which is in all things, whether in Likeness or Form, Liquid or Mist, Light or Lightning, fire or ignition, or in any form of nature whatsoever.

This great THOU is in us also, for our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit of God. This in-ness

in ourselves and the elements is our Guiding Spirit which induces us instinctively and intuitively to worship the Author of our being; it is the source of our sense of MORALITY.

### 3. POTENTIALITY, NESS, S.

The great HE, the Son of God, the Seed of God, and the Word of God who made the world is the Power in the Church which He founded and owns. He is the force in the *seed* by which life passes from one generation to another in plants, animals, and mankind. He is the *speaking* God who taught the disciples the Lord's Prayer. He is the Power or POTENTIALITY in the whole of His creation.

### 4. VOLITION, Q, K, G.

The *will of God* is the designing and generating power which *quickens* what appears to us to be dead: it is that which *kindles* within us all our natural desires and brings us into perfect communion with our Great Creator.

### 5. VITALISATION, T, D, W.

Our Creator is the vitalisation of us all. His *touch* is life-giving. He made the world and He supplies the needs of the world. He washes us in His most precious blood. He watches over us and preserves us all our days. He is the bridegroom of His Church, He is *wedded* to it.

### 6. Reciprocity, h, y, j.

God has inspired man, who inhales and exhales breath; and the Spirit of God moves all nature to give back what has been received.

The fowls lay and hatch their eggs. The trees *yield* their seeds, which swell and *yield* roots and branches. The animals *yean* and bring forth their young.

All these things are in answer to the moving power of the Spirit of God.

### 7. Capacity, r, b, p.

God, the Author of our being, has created a Ruminating Race of animals which has the capacity to Beget, Produce, Run, Suffer Pain, and in man Reach Perfection by paying regard to fixed laws.

In conclusion I will give you three lists of nouns in this order which I think will make the philosophy at the back of the Yoruba alphabet quite plain.[1]

Authority (Ofin).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | Õfa | Effufu | Ici | I F F C or V |
| God Father | Attraction | Wind | A new thing | |

Morality (Mimo).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| U | Ínu | Omi | Ollè | U N M L |
| God Spirit | In-ness | Water | Embryo | |

Potentiality (Ashe).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| O | Isá | Iso | Ish-she | O S S Sh or Z |
| God Word | Evaporation | Production | Work | |

[1] Note; please read each list from top to bottom to obtain the physical, vegetable and animal order in production.

VOLITION (Agidi).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Igbona | Íkú | Ìkke | A Gb K G |
| God Will | Heat | Destruction | Act of fondling | |

VITALISATION (Ida).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Ida | Iwu | Itankale | A D W T |
| God Creator | Fusion | Swelling | Propagation | |

RECIPROCITY (Ifiji).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| E | Jijo | Ihù | Oyún | E J H Y |
| God Mover | Combustion | Fermentation | Conception | |

CAPACITY (Ipa).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Iran | Ippon | Ibi | A R P B |
| God Speaker | A shining | Ripeness | Birth | |
| | Sunshine | | | |

RIRAN ŌRÙN

In the order shown to be the order in the Lord's Prayer of my Yoruba alphabet and in that of the Elemental factors it is evident that the purposes of God, the great creative spirit, who has prompted man to think and talk, have been accomplished, they are the effects of His fixed commands.

Finally, the logical conclusion that is to be drawn from all these categories is that to be really successful in all organisations man must conform to this great universal order, not in part, but as an inseparable and comprehensive whole.

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